

CHAPTER 7: REVITALIZATION

Overview

Chesterfield County is a community committed to promoting and maintaining a high quality of life for all citizens and employers. As such, it is important that the county's neighborhoods and business corridors be maintained in the highest quality possible and stabilized to ensure continued vitality.

For many years, Chesterfield County has been successful in attracting new growth and development. No longer primarily a new suburban community, revitalization must become a principal focus. Between 1970 and 2010, the county experienced a 310 percent increase in population. As a result, the county focused efforts and resources on supporting this rapid growth by providing public facilities and infrastructure in these newer developing areas while not making the same level of investment in older established areas. The attractiveness of new development supported by new public facilities and infrastructure resulted in many residents choosing to locate to newer developing areas. This movement contributed to declining neighborhood and commercial areas and a population requiring increased public services. The resulting diminishing tax base in these areas typically has not supported the cost of needed public services.

The public sector's role for ensuring long term stability and supporting a high quality of life is to provide equitable distribution and efficient allocation of public resources. Provision of equitable public services will promote private investment and reinvestment in aging and maturing areas.

A successful revitalization program will have a positive impact on property values and reduce the demand for public services. Such a program should have special focus on:

- School parity
- Community organization and involvement
- Neighborhood enhancement initiatives
- Business attraction and retention strategies
- Proactive code enforcement.

This program, focusing on aging and maturing residential communities; business corridors; gateways; and public facilities, will strengthen Chesterfield County as a "First Choice" community in which to live, work, shop and play.

ROLE OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES IN REVITALIZATION EFFORTS

Public investment in established communities is an essential component of the county's revitalization efforts. Public facilities such as police stations, fire and emergency service stations, schools, parks and libraries are an integral part of the community fabric and can have a profound impact on the social, economic and physical character of a neighborhood. Public sector investment acts as a catalyst to spur private investment in these areas. It is important that the county's comprehensive revitalization strategy links the location and quality of public facilities to the continued vitality and health of communities. The Public Facilities Plan chapter supports revitalization efforts by promoting public facility parity by encouraging renovation of existing facilities in established communities when economically feasible, and when not, rebuilding on or as close as possible to, existing sites.

As an example, The Public Facilities Plan chapter promotes:

- School parity by rehabilitating or replacing older facilities in aging and maturing neighborhoods with an emphasis on smaller, community-based schools.
- Community-based public safety facilities.
- Use of the public library system beyond its traditional function by establishing its role as a community-gathering place and an educational, cultural, informational and small business resource center.
- An equitable active and passive parks system.

Neighborhood Enhancement Areas

Strong, vibrant neighborhoods have a diverse mix of quality housing and well maintained properties supported by excellent public facilities, all of which are critical components of a healthy community. While the median age of the county's detached single-family housing is 23 years, many neighborhoods have older housing, some of which require substantial rehabilitation and proactive maintenance. In addition, as these neighborhoods have aged, so too have the public facilities built to serve them.

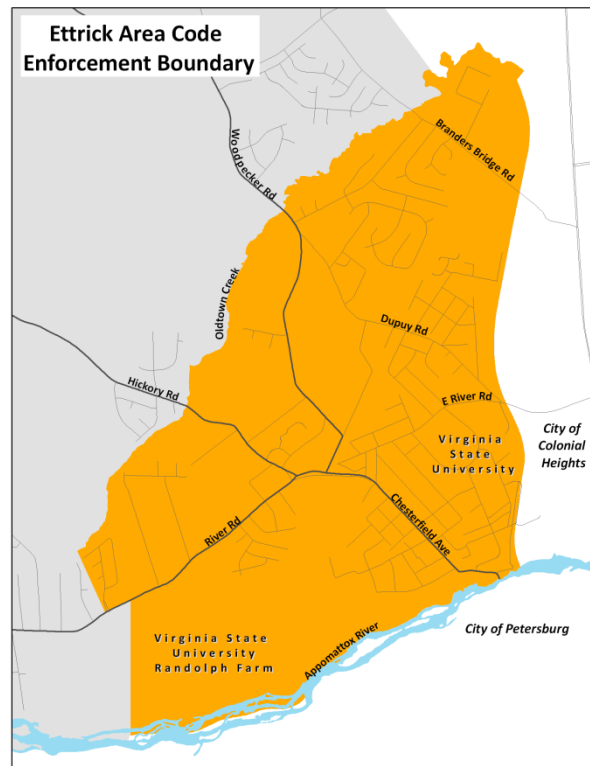
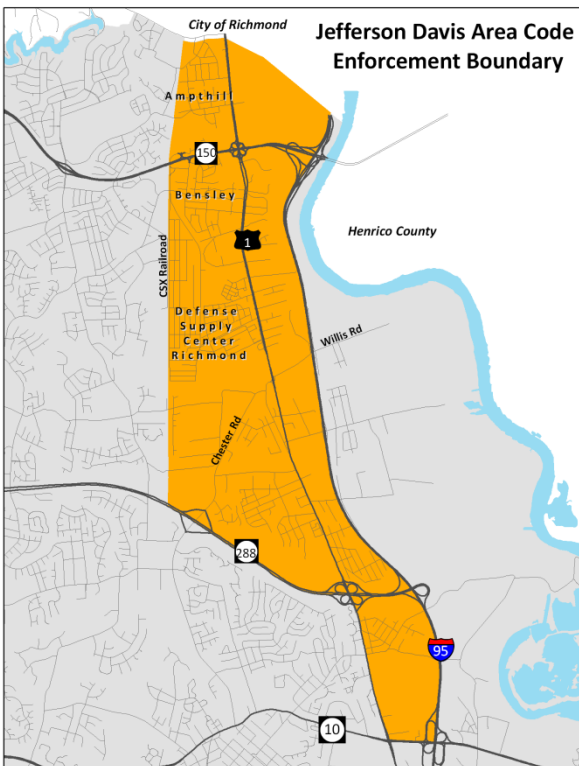
Neighborhood Enhancement Areas are primarily residential neighborhoods experiencing a transition such as:

- An aging housing stock and public infrastructure
- Lack of property maintenance
- Encroachment of incompatible land uses
- Declining owner-occupancy
- Declining or stagnant property values and rental rates as compared to other parts of the county.

Currently, the Department of Building Inspection's criteria for proactively addressing property maintenance and zoning code issues require that neighborhoods:

- Be at least four years old
- Contain more than 20 housing units
- Have 80 percent or fewer of the housing units as owner-occupied
- Have 20 percent or more properties with zoning and property maintenance violations.

In addition to the Department of Building Inspection's proactive property maintenance program, the county also has a proactive zoning code enforcement program focused on the northern Jefferson Davis Highway Corridor and Ettrick areas. These areas were selected based upon the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's formula for determining areas that are experiencing decline.



For this planning effort, specific Neighborhood Enhancement Areas have not been identified. Following adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, a Neighborhood Enhancement Program shall be developed to identify, evaluate and address neighborhoods in transition. Criteria for designating these areas shall be considered through the development of the program. As a basis for identifying these areas, the Building Inspection Department's criteria could initially be considered for use with amendments and additions as deemed appropriate through the development of the program. Additional criteria could include consideration of neighborhoods where new or renovated public facilities are planned that would spur revitalization efforts.

Special Focus and Gateway Areas

Beginning in the late 1980s, the Comprehensive Plan began to identify strategies for the long-term health of older commercial and residential communities. Special Area Plans such as The (Northern) Jefferson Davis Corridor Plan, The Eastern Midlothian Plan, (Eastern) Route 360 Corridor Plan and The Ettrick Village Plan were developed to address the challenges of maintaining the community's physical, social and economic vitality. In addition, new programs such as the enterprise zone, proactive code enforcement and streetscape improvements were initiated. Special Area Plans are further discussed in The Land Use Plan and Special Area Plans chapters.



Special Focus Areas are primarily business corridors and centers experiencing a transition such as:

- Aging buildings and public infrastructure
- Lack of property maintenance and encroachment of incompatible land uses
- Increasing vacancy rates
- Declining or stagnant property values and rental rates as compared to other parts of the county.

Special Focus Areas could include neighborhoods immediately surrounding and impacting the commercial areas.

Some Special Focus Areas could also contain Gateways into the county. Gateways are the front doors to businesses and neighborhoods, providing the “first impression” for those entering the county. The degree to which a community invests in making a good impression on visitors and potential investors is a direct reflection of what residents and businesses value. Investment in Gateways is not simply an exercise in aesthetics; it supports sound economic development and vibrant neighborhoods. Enhancing and maintaining these Special Focus Areas and Gateways promotes Chesterfield County as a strong and viable economic engine and healthy community.

SPECIAL FOCUS AND GATEWAY AREAS GENERAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

General challenges and opportunities could include:

- Aging and maturing business corridors and the surrounding neighborhoods
- Social and cultural demographic shifts
- Lack of business variety and housing options
- Marketing an area's advantages as a business location
- Supporting existing, and attracting new, businesses
- Existing zoning and land uses, potential land uses and land use compatibility
- Vacant or underutilized buildings and land
- Adequate and efficient transportation and pedestrian infrastructure, circulation and multi-modal travel
- Aging water, wastewater, stormwater and water quality infrastructure
- Lack of a sense of place that creates a desire to live, work, shop and play
- Preservation and protection of historic and cultural sites, structures and resources.

While Special Focus and Gateway Areas share similar challenges and opportunities, those that are unique to specific areas will be identified through future detailed planning efforts.

SPECIAL FOCUS AND GATEWAY AREAS

Following adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, a Special Focus and Gateway Areas Program should be developed to identify, evaluate and address specific areas to be considered for such a program.

For this planning purpose, five Special Focus and Gateway Areas have been identified:

- Eastern Midlothian Turnpike
- Eastern Route 360 Corridor
- Meadowdale/Meadowbrook Area
- Northern Jefferson Davis Corridor
- Ettrick/ Virginia State University (VSU).



The exact boundaries of the five identified Special Focus and Gateway Areas has not been determined. These boundaries will be determined through more detailed analysis. The boundaries may or may not coincide with similarly named existing Special Area Plans that are identified in the Special Area Plans chapter. Some Special Focus and Gateway Area Plans may be incorporated into Special Area Plan amendments.

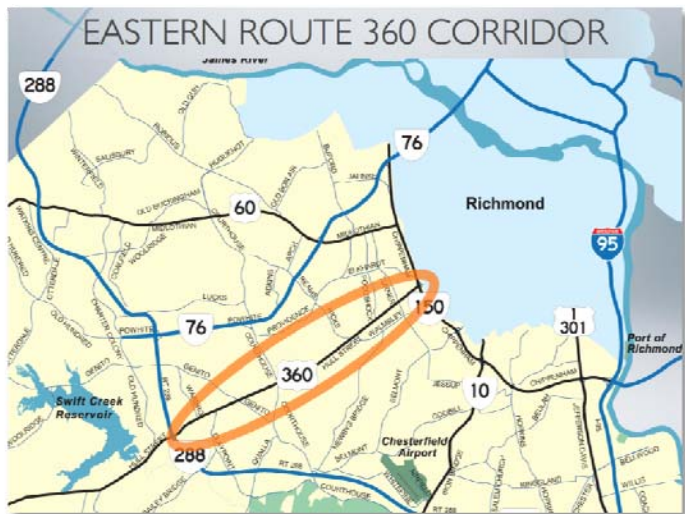
Eastern Midlothian Corridor

With the expansion of Chippenham Parkway as a limited access road, this area experienced significant economic growth. In the 1970's, the development of the county's first regional indoor mall, Cloverleaf, was the catalyst for increased retail activity along the corridor. The area thrived for many years, but began to experience vacancies with the westward movement of new residential developments. The area is influenced by the existence of the Boulders Development, a mixed use corporate office and multifamily residential community, and Chippenham Hospital. A public-private partnership between the county and a private developer, Crosland Southeast, for the redevelopment of the Cloverleaf Mall Site as a mixed-use project, Stonebridge, has stimulated economic development activity. The Kroger Company's commitment to build their newest flagship store at Stonebridge and Virginia College's recent investment in the Spring Rock Green development just to the north of Stonebridge are examples of this renewed economic interest. While there is a strong residential presence in the surrounding area, these neighborhoods have experienced the impacts of aging and past decline in retail activity.



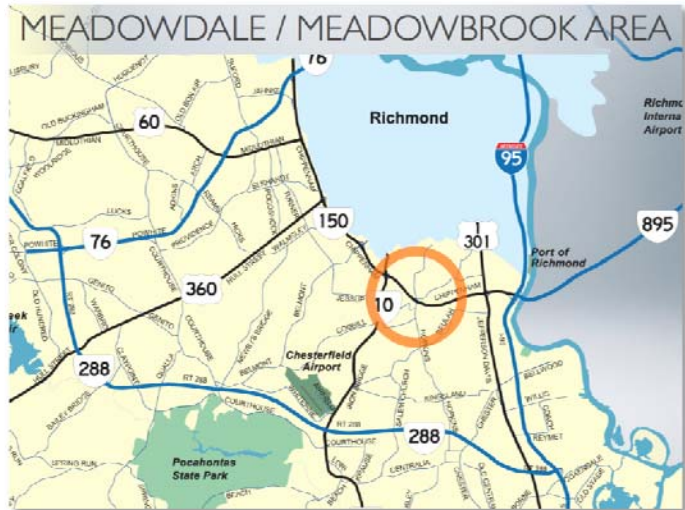
Eastern Route 360 Corridor

Business development along this corridor has generally been concentrated between Walmsley Boulevard and Chippenham Parkway, and between Courthouse Road and Route 288. This area has contrasting rural, suburban and commercial development patterns. These development patterns could be changed with the extension of public wastewater. The Route 360 Corridor presents opportunities for business infill development to support surrounding aging and maturing residential neighborhoods. Recent development activity to the west has resulted in vacancies of both small and big box retail spaces. The county has already begun to evaluate those properties and identify their potential reuse. The county has also partnered with the City of Richmond through a federal grant to develop a plan to address potential redevelopment for a section of Route 360, generally from Warwick Road in the city to Turner Road in the county. This information could be used to support a future county revitalization plan for Eastern Route 360 Corridor.



Meadowdale/Meadowbrook Area

With the growth of residential communities in this area to support housing needs for employees of nearby industrial uses, the community-scale shopping centers of Meadowbrook and Meadowdale developed at the interchange of Hopkins Road and Chippenham Parkway. While over time this gateway shopping area experienced high vacancy rates, there has been recent increased business investment and occupancy. Residential communities in these areas are maturing. The new Meadowdale Library is a positive example of the impact that a public facility investment can have on aging and maturing areas by serving as a community center and housing the county's Small Business Resource Center which supports business entrepreneurship.



Northern Jefferson Davis Corridor

In the early 1900's, suburban neighborhoods, such as Bensley, began to develop in proximity to employment opportunities and the Richmond and Petersburg Electric Railway which generally paralleled Jefferson Davis Highway. Until construction of Interstate 95 in the mid 1950's, Jefferson Davis Highway (Route 1/301) was the major north/south highway on the east coast between Florida and Maine. The corridor was lined with businesses supporting the traveling public and surrounding residential neighborhoods. With the completion of Interstate 95, business demand along the corridor declined, shifting to areas more accessible to the interstate.



A unique and important part of Chesterfield County's history, the northern Jefferson Davis Corridor continues to offer a variety of housing and business opportunities. Successful partnerships between the county and the community have begun revitalization efforts. Examples include:

- A small business incubator, BizWorks Enterprise Center, supporting entrepreneurship.
- Enterprise zone designation providing business incentives such as tax abatements and fee waivers.
- Flexible development standards encouraging reinvestment and redevelopment.
- Historic corridor designation (Historic Route 1 Corridor) by the Virginia General Assembly and historic sites such as the Falling Creek Ironworks and Bridge, all offering tourism opportunities.
- Streetscape project (with phase one already complete) providing aesthetic and sidewalk improvements.

Ettrick/Virginia State University (VSU)

The Ettrick/Virginia State University (VSU) area consisting of approximately 3.3 square miles adjacent to the Appomattox River and Colonial Heights is rich in history. Home to the nation's oldest state supported land-grant college for African-Americans, the campus is currently undergoing expansion and enhancement presenting significant redevelopment opportunities in Ettrick. The university's expansion creates the need for additional services and housing to support students and faculty, as well as the surrounding residential community. Through cooperative efforts between VSU and the



county, a proposed Chesterfield Avenue streetscape and pedestrian enhancement project has been developed to benefit existing, and attract new businesses to the area. In addition, the county has entered into an agreement with the University to connect their campus to the county's public water and wastewater system to support expansion plans. The Ettrick Amtrak Station, another important area economic opportunity, currently offers access to north/south passenger rail service with new service to Norfolk expected in 2012. Proposals to provide new passenger services and high speed rail with stops at the Ettrick Station would have a tremendous economic benefit to the area. Further discussions about the Ettrick/VSU area and commuter/high speed rail can be found in The Land Use Plan and Transportation chapters.

As detailed planning efforts proceed in this area, it will be important to carefully consider the transportation infrastructure necessary to support redevelopment of Ettrick and expansion of VSU.

Additional Special Focus and Gateway Areas

Additional Special Focus and Gateway Areas may be identified as part of a countywide, comprehensive revitalization strategy. Specific criteria will be identified through the development of a detailed program. At a minimum, these areas should meet the following criteria:

- Increasing commercial, retail or industrial facility vacancy rates
- One or more census tracts identified as "distressed" by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development criteria
- Aging or insufficient public infrastructure
- One or more residential communities that meets the Neighborhood Enhancement Area criteria.

General Revitalization Guidelines

Revitalization is linked to many chapters in the Comprehensive Plan. The General Revitalization Guidelines provide direction for revitalization efforts and decisions.

Major considerations used in the development of these guidelines include:

- ❖ Fair and balanced allocation of public investment between existing and new development through appropriate fiscal tools and policies.
- ❖ Fair and equitable provision of public services and infrastructure.
- ❖ Enhancing the sense of place to support socio-economic well-being.
- ❖ Maintaining and expanding the economic vitality and quality of life.
- ❖ Integrating revitalization efforts into all aspects of community planning, where appropriate.

The following General Revitalization Guidelines should be considered when addressing revitalization strategies and decisions:

- **Revitalization Strategy.** Develop a revitalization strategy to promote public and private commitments to enhance, restore and maintain the quality and diversity of neighborhoods and business corridors. These strategies should include:
 - Developing criteria for designating Neighborhood Enhancement Areas and Special Focus and Gateway Areas.
 - Focusing public and private investment in Neighborhood Enhancement Areas and Special Focus and Gateway Areas by renovating or replacing declining infrastructure and public facilities, and encouraging new housing and businesses.
 - Retaining and expanding existing uses and attracting new uses consistent with the recommendations of The Land Use Plan chapter.
 - Coordinating proactive code enforcement to include zoning, building and health codes.
 - Developing standards for maintaining rental property.
 - Evaluating how the county can more effectively and efficiently promote revitalization.
 - Incorporating plans for Neighborhood Enhancement Areas and Special Focus and Gateway Areas into Special Area Plans where appropriate.
- **Public Facilities.** Encourage public facility parity throughout the county by:
 - Supporting renovation and maintenance of existing facilities, especially schools, in established communities when economically feasible. When not economically feasible, rebuild on, or in proximity to, existing sites.
 - Supporting new infrastructure such as parks and sidewalks in established communities.

- **Fiscal Responsibility.** Support revitalization efforts that maximize benefit from the efficient use of public and private financial resources by:
 - Supporting investment in public facilities and infrastructure.
 - Identifying funding sources and tools to support revitalization efforts.
 - Promoting private-public partnerships to improve infrastructure.
- **Collaboration.** Foster collaboration with governmental agencies, community and business associations, property owners, and faith-based and non-profit organizations to promote mutually beneficial revitalization opportunities.
- **Detailed Neighborhood Enhancement Areas, and Special Focus and Gateway Areas Plans.** Develop detailed plans for these areas which should include:
 - Identifying community stakeholders.
 - Performing a market and socio-economic analysis.
 - Identifying a vision and goals.
 - Identifying existing conditions to include zoning, development regulations, buildings, uses, vacant properties and potential on-site contaminants.
 - Incorporating Gateways to communicate a positive, distinct and attractive identity.
 - Rehabilitating, reusing or replacing public facilities to create a sense of community and encourage new investment.
 - Evaluating transportation to include levels of service and multi-model transportation options; utilities and other public infrastructure.
 - Evaluating environmental features; restoring damaged, impaired and/or degraded environmental features; incorporating, protecting and enhancing environmental features to improve community livability and aesthetics.
 - Providing public improvements necessary to stimulate revitalization.
 - Identifying natural, historical, recreational and cultural assets.
 - Identifying incentives that support revitalization and reinvestment.
 - Providing flexible and appropriate design standards specific to area needs that enhance and encourage investment.

- **Housing.** Support housing reinvestment and infill in established communities by:
 - Identifying funding sources and tools for housing rehabilitation and renovation.
 - Promoting housing maintenance, rehabilitation and renovation through education and proactive code enforcement efforts.
 - Supporting integration of new development into existing communities in accordance with the recommendations in The Land Use Plan chapter where such development would enhance existing neighborhoods.
 - Identifying transportation enhancements to promote the community's accessibility to employment and services.
 - Promoting redevelopment and new development of supporting community retail uses and services.
 - Supporting the development of a design guide for renovating and rehabilitating older housing stock.
- **Marketing and Communications.** Pursue efforts to market Special Focus and Gateway Areas as prime business locations.
- **Tourism.** Promote unique recreational, natural, cultural and historical resources in Neighborhood Enhancement and Special Focus and Gateway Areas for tourism.